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With not a few primitive peoples there exists a taboo of tale-telling in summer. The Ojibwa and certain other Algonkian tribes of the Great Lakes¹ give as a reason for not telling the "tales of the fathers" in summer, that "frogs and other disagreeable things would enter into the camp;" moreover, during the winter, the great Nanibozhu is at leisure, and can listen to the tales of his own mighty deeds. Concerning the Winnebago Indians, Mrs. F. D. Bergen² observes:—

"The old people do not like to tell their stories after the spring opens. The children are told that they would see snakes if they should listen to tales during warm weather."

Among the Omaha Indians, where "story-telling is an important part of home-life," the favorite season is winter, and there is "a superstition which prevents the telling of stories in the summer season, as the snakes may hear and do mischief." But, as Miss Fletcher³ further informs us, this taboo is lifted for the children, who "carry the songs out among the summer blossoms, and the snakes do them no harm."

This brief note is offered with the object of obtaining information as to the nature and prevalence of the "day-taboo" and the "summer-taboo." It is interesting to note the agreement of the Indian tribes mentioned in the matter of snakes, as the disturbing factor in summer-time and in day-time.

Alex. F. Chamberlain.

WORCESTER, MASS.

THE BEAR IN HELLENIC ASTRAL MYTHOLOGY.—A passage of the *Odyssey* (v. 271–277) relates in what manner Odysseus, returning from the isle of Kalypso in the extreme west, determines his direction by observation of the heavens. "No sleep fell on his eyes, gazing on the Pleiads, and the tardily setting Boötes, and the Bear also named the Wain, who yonder revolves, and watches Orion, and who alone hath no part in the baths of ocean. For Kalypso, divine among goddesses, commanded him to keep it on the left as he voyaged." Hence it appears that Greek mariners determined the north by observation of the Great Bear. On the other hand, a mention of Aratus says that the more skilful Phœnician sailors consulted the Little Bear, that is to say especially the polar star. The three stars in the tail of the smaller bear (the north star at the end) appear to have originally received the name of the Dog's Tail, a title given because they made the impression of the lifted tail of that animal. It may have been the respect paid to the greater bear which induced observers to transfer the same name to stars which also were used for marks of direction; fancy was able to create a second bear, while the intermediate circle of stars was compared to a serpent. According to the passage of the *Odyssey*, the Great Bear is said to keep an eye on the hunter Orion; but this introduction of a distant group is probably only the fancy of the poet. The lines show that the Wain was an equally ancient name for the constellation.

¹ *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, vol. iv. p. 195.

² *Ibid.* vol. ix. p. 54.

³ *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 120.

Beside these two Roman star-lore knows a third appellation; the stars are called Septemtriones, the seven threshing-oxen, who are conceived to travel round and round the area, or threshing-floor, trampling out the grain. It is usually supposed that the name Boötes, or Ox-man, answers to the wagon, inasmuch as the stars represent a driver with outstretched hand. G. Thiele ("Antike Himmelsbildung," Berlin, 1898) thinks that the reference may be to the oxen, and that the comparison with the threshing-floor is thereby proved to be as ancient as that to the bear and the wagon; the three stars extending from the Wain must, he thinks, have been conceived as the pole of the cart, not as the draught-oxen. However this may be, the designations must originally have depended on obvious appearance, and been given with respect to the seven bright stars; the astronomical figures, in which the visible aspect is subordinated to an artificial construction, must have come later. The Bear, therefore, must have been thought of as having a body formed of four stars, and with an extended tail of three stars (just as the three stars of the Dog's Tail were turned into the tail of Ursa Minor.) This tail is a puzzle; what has a bear to do with a long bushy appendage of this sort? The incongruity rather makes against the probable primitiveness of the name. It is presumably a later change, when Hesiod gives to Boötes, the Ox-goader, the name Arctouros, or Bear-ward, (subsequently also Arctophylax); the idea of a bear-keeper, perhaps a travelling performer, is decidedly more sophisticated.

To a late stage also may belong the identification of Callisto with the group. Callisto seems to have been an epithetic name of Artemis. We are told by Hesiod that she was changed into a bear by that goddess, as a penalty for her pregnancy. She becomes mother of Arkas, hero eponymous of Arkadians. Again, Atalante, also connected with the same deity, was suckled by a bear. The inference to be drawn from these stories is, that in the Arkadian Artemis, at least, we have to do with an early bear-goddess, who, in virtue of the usual complications of mythology, came to be identified with various other personages, and so became the centre of a complicated mythology. The connection of these tales with the constellation seems to have resulted from the ursine character of the goddess and her variously named doubles, and have been quite secondary and accidental. It is true that the hunter Orion is said to have been killed by Artemis; but the myths explain this as the punishment of excessive boastfulness, or of insults offered to the virginity of the deity; the true root of the tale may have been aversion, on the part of a goddess of the forest, to the hunters who destroy, without making atonement, animals of the wood, who are under her protection, and in their pursuit of these violate her sanctuary. As already remarked, the Homeric connection of Orion and the Bear has the appearance of being no more than a poetic fancy, the inspiration of the moment; the author pictures the animal as naturally suspicious of the mighty hunter. So far as appears, therefore, Greek star-lore knows nothing of a bear-hunt.

On the other hand, the American star-myth, as shown by Mr. Hagar, describes the pursuit of the bear in a manner clear, vivid, and standing in

obvious relation to the celestial phenomena of which the tale is an interpretation. The story is just such as would suggest itself to a hunting-folk. The Indian tale corresponds to the Greek in the usual manner, as much more direct and simple; the Greek fables, in the course of culture development, have become inextricably interwoven.

Of parallelism between the American and Hellenic myths, there is nothing left to be explained save identity of name of the constellation; but in the latter, the Bear was only one out of many appellations. Thiele undertakes to show that the greater number of Greek star-names, including those of the Zodiac, are by no means primitive and traditional in their origin, but for the most part the inventions of later observers and mythopoeists. At all events, it is certain that these names, and the stories attached to them, were in continual process of expansion and alteration. On the other hand, Thiele, like other scholars of Greek thought, forgets that the Hellenes stand not at the beginning of an independent development, but at a term of a mental activity of thousands of years, during which savage fancy was as freely imaginative as was that of the poets and mythographers whose fictions alone are extant. Perhaps if we knew just why the constellation was called the Bear, and all that was signified in the description, we should find ourselves in contact with a realistic picture something like that of American Indians. However this may be, the coincidence of name appears to me altogether too casual an indication for its explanation to require the supposition of any intercourse of diffusion between the continents.

W. W. Newell.

LOCAL MEETINGS AND OTHER NOTICES.

BOSTON.—*Tuesday, April 18.* The regular meeting was held at the Brunswick by invitation of Mr. and Mrs. George H. Leonard. The speaker was Mr. A. M. Lythgoe, of Harvard University, whose subject was "Arts and Crafts of the Ancient Egyptians." His lecture was illustrated by fine lantern slides.

Tuesday, May 23. The annual meeting (postponed by vote from April) was held at Miss Reed's, 184 Commonwealth Avenue. No paper was offered, in order that sufficient time might be allowed for the transaction of business. In the absence of Professor Putnam, Mr. Frank Russell presided, and the reports of the Secretary and the Treasurer were read. The former showed that though the membership gain (13) exceeded the losses by death, resignation (10), a revision of the list made the membership smaller than a year ago. The Treasurer reported that the expenditure of the year had practically equalled the income.

The resignation of the Treasurer, Mr. Chamberlain, was accepted with regret, and the election of officers which followed resulted in the following choice: *President*, Prof. F. W. Putnam. *First Vice-President*, Dr. G. J. Englemann. *Second Vice-President*, Mr. W. W. Newell. *Treasurer*, Mr. R. B. Dixon. *Secretary*, Miss Helen Leah Reed. *Council*, Mrs. E. F.